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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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DIRECTIONS FOR DESTROYING POCKET GOPHERS

Pocket gophers are readily caught in several makes of special traps commonly on the market, and a few of these suffice to keep small areas free of these pests. For ridding alfalfa fields, orchards, and long stretches of ditch embankments of them, a very successful and much more practical method is to poison them by placing baits of sweet potato or of parsnips in their underground runways.

The baits should be cut about an inch long and a half inch square, and washed and drained. From a pepper box slowly sift 1/8 ounce of powdered strychnine (alkaloid) and 1/10 of this quantity of saccharine (ground together in a mortar) over about four quarts of the dampened baits, stirring to distribute the poison evenly.

The runways, which are usually 4 to 8 inches beneath the surface, can be located by means of a probe made of any strong handle an inch in diameter and 36 inches long. One end should be bluntly pointed. Into the other should be fitted a piece of 3/8 inch iron rod, protruding about 12 inches, and bluntly pointed. A foot rest aids in probing in hard soils. By forcing down this iron rod near gopher workings, or a foot or two back of fresh mounds, the open tunnel can be felt as the point breaks into it. The blunt end of the instrument is now used to carefully enlarge the hole, a bait or two is dropped into the run and the probe hole closed.

One soon becomes expert in locating the runs, and a man can treat 300 to 500 gopher workings in a day. Baits need be placed at only two points in each separate system of 10 or 30 mounds, which is usually the home of a single gopher. In our experience baits placed fairly in the open runs have invariably killed the gophers. The method has found great favor wherever it has been introduced.

